

“MR. MOODY’S TEXT”**NO. 2541****A SERMON****INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 31, 1897*****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON*****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON****ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 15, 1884*****“I will trust, and not be afraid.”******Isaiah 12:2***

I SAW this text advertised as being printed in colors and it was called, “Mr. Moody’s Text.” When I saw him yesterday, I asked him how it was his text any more than it is mine. He said that he was sure he did not know—he never called it his text, so far as he knew. Somebody may have thought it a very proper text for him and so it is, but I lay claim to the text, too, and I should advise every Christian to say, “That is my text also.”

I would be very glad if some who are not Christians should be brought by the grace of God into the bonds of the covenant and should be able to lay hold on this text, and so say, “I will trust, and not be afraid.” I told Mr. Moody that if it belonged to nobody else in particular, it certainly was mine. He said, “How so?” “Well,” I replied, “I told my people the meaning of that text some time ago.”

I said to you, dear friends, that you might get to heaven by the free-grace train if you did but get on board it anywhere, but that it was always advisable, if you could, to travel first-class. I pointed out the third-class carriage to you. This is it—“What time I am afraid, I will trust in the LORD.” If you get in there, you will go all right to the journey’s end, but it is much better to be where there are nice, soft cushions to sit upon. This is the first-class carriage—“I will trust, and not be afraid.” You are no safer, I suppose, in one carriage than in the other, but certainly, you are much more comfortable in this first-class carriage. “I will trust, and not be afraid.”

Having told that story, I claim the text as being my own. However, it will be all the more mine by belonging to other people. I count that it is rather a narrowing of a man’s possessions when he cannot permit others to enjoy them without losing the enjoyment of them himself. But it makes your treasure all the richer, and the larger, when everybody else may have it and yet you yourself may have none the less.

So is it with this delightful text. I may say it. You may say it, my brother, and you, my sister, you, venerable sire, and you, juvenile believer—you may each one say, by the grace of God, “I will trust, and not be afraid.”

The man, however, who dares to say it, and who ought to say it, is the man described in this remarkable chapter of Isaiah. “In that day *thou* shalt say, O LORD, *I* will praise thee.” The man who can truly say, “I will trust, and not be afraid,” is the man who from his heart praises God, the man who spends his breath, and spends his life in magnifying the Most High.

Then the prophet goes on, “I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me.” So that the man who can say, “I will trust, and not be afraid,” is the man who has felt something of the anger of God, one who has known what it is to come under the lash of the law, but also who has realized what it is to be delivered from its iron grip.

He who has never felt the burden of sin will, I think, never know the joy of faith. What has he to trust about? What cause is there for his being afraid when he does not see any sin in himself? But he who is consciously a sinner is the man who can say, “I will trust, and not be afraid,” when the Lord has forgiven him his sin.

Isaiah proceeds, “Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid.” When your whole salvation is found in God, especially in God as He reveals Himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ—when Christ is your Savior and has saved you from your sin, then indeed may you say, “I will trust, and not be afraid.”

It is in the hope that I am addressing many persons here of this character that I have taken this text, “I will trust, and not be afraid.” If I can, I am going to do four things with the text. First, I am going to *twist the text*. Secondly, to *untwist it*. Thirdly, to *press it*. And fourthly, to *praise it*.

I. First, then, I propose to do what you may think is a very horrible thing, and what, as a rule, I will not do. That is, I am going to TWIST THE TEXT.

Mark you, I shall not do this myself—I only intend to tell you how a great many persons do twist it. They use most of the same words, but they put them in the wrong position. For instance, one man says, “*I will not trust and yet I will not be afraid.*” He does not say, “I will trust, and not be afraid,” but “I will not trust, and yet I will not be afraid. I am no believer in Christ. I do not need any free-grace Gospel. I need no mercy, for I am righteous, I have kept the law. I shall not trust in Jesus and yet I shall not be afraid.”

Alas! there are persons who do not say that in words, but in effect, that is exactly what they say. They have no righteousness but their own and that is only filthy rags—yet they say that they are rich, increased in goods, and have need of nothing. I heard of a man who wrote over his door these words, “Let no evil person enter here.” One of his neighbors remarked that if he carried out his own orders, he would never be able to go into his own house.

I am afraid that there are many people who think all others evil except themselves, yet if they could but look within, they would discover that the evil person not only lives in their house, but that his head is under their hat. They are, in fact, themselves the evil persons, though they think that they are righteous.

Now, dear friend, if you fancy that you can live in this world wrapped up in yourself without being afraid, if you suppose that you can, without fear, die clad only in your own righteousness, I pray you do not be such a fool as to suppose that you can wake up in the next world in your own righteousness and not be afraid. Oh, if you had but a clear view of how defective and how defiled your righteousness is in the sight of God, you would never dare to put any confidence in it.

Much better men than you, such for instance as David, have cried, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” The Gospel teaches us that there is no salvation by our own works. If there were, what need would there be of the work of Christ? What need of yonder awful tragedy on Calvary, if we could save ourselves and could stand calm and quiet and fearless without a trust in the Lord Jesus Christ? I do pray you, do not adopt such proud and boastful language as to say, “I will not trust and yet I will not be afraid.”

Are you an utter worldling? Do you say, “Give me plenty to eat and drink, and I do not care about that faith of which you make so much. I want ready cash, I want to have my portion now”? If that is the way you talk now, there may come a time when you will be quiet and alone, when fear will steal over you.

There may come a time of trouble when the comforts of this world will vanish from you. There may come a season of sickness when all your money bags, if they were laid upon your suffering body, could not heal it, and when all your broad possessions will only make it the harder to die, and leave them all. Do not try to twist my text in that way, I do implore you, for it must be a losing game for you if you say, “I will not trust and yet I will not be afraid.”

Then I have seen the text twisted another way, thus, “*I will be afraid and not trust.*” There are many people who are doing this. If they are not saying it in words, they are practically doing it. They are naturally timorous, they are afraid of many of the ordinary events that happen in the providence of God and they also have sufficient conscience to know that they have done wrong in the sight of God—and that sin must be punished. So they are afraid and they keep on being afraid, for they will not trust in Christ Jesus to save them.

This is a very painful condition for anyone to be in—and if it should get still more painful, I should not wonder—neither should I particularly pity the person who is in such a state. If he chooses to be afraid, and refuses to trust, whatever mischief follows upon such mistrust he richly deserves. O friend, if you are afraid, I do pray you to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not, I fear that one of these days, you will get to trust in your being afraid.

You ask, “How can I do that?” I have seen scores of persons who, because they have felt the weight of sin, have begun to trust in their convictions. They have said, “We are not like some whom we know, we cannot sin without fearing the price of conscience, we are seeking the Savior, we are desirous of finding Christ.”

Yet there they stick. I heard one say that such a state of mind as that is often the doorstep to grace. So I believe it is, but if any of you go to your homes and sit on the doorstep all night, I think it is highly probable that the policeman will want to know what you are doing there. I should suspect that you had taken something that had not done you any good, if you sat there all night. I would not recommend you to attempt it, even literally. But spiritually, it is a horrible thing to get to the doorstep of grace and sit there—to get to the doorstep of heaven and sit there, for outside of heaven is hell—even if it is the very doorstep of heaven.

If you are not in Christ, you are out of Christ. He that is not alive is dead. He that is not washed is foul. He that is not regenerate is unregenerate. There cannot be any space between these two—there is no neutral border ground. I pray you, therefore, do not trust in your being afraid. Do not settle down contentedly in that condition.

I have known people go in and out of the house of God for years and never accept Christ, and they have grown to be confirmed doubters, confirmed distrusters, confirmed despairers. Oh, I pray you, do not get into that state! It is a horrible condition of heart. But instead of saying, “I will be afraid and will not trust,” may God the Holy Spirit sweetly incline you to say, “I will trust, and not be afraid.”

There is a third class of people who twist my text in this way, “*I will trust, and be afraid.*” Again I confess that they do not say it, but they do it, and actions speak louder than words. They do trust, yet they are afraid. It looks as if that could not be, yet I have known some, about whom I have been compelled to think, in the judgment of charity, that they do trust, and therefore that they are saved, yet, for all that, they are very much afraid.

Oh, these dear good inconsistent people! They seem as if they were resolved to shut themselves out of the kingdom even while the door of mercy stands wide open. The sun is shining brightly, so they pull down all the blinds, and they cannot be satisfied until they have excluded every ray of light. This is not right, for my dear doubting friend, it brings no glory to God, it is no recommendation of true religion, and it is a stumbling block in the way of a good many other people. If I am addressing any such persons, young or old, I pray the Lord to enable them to give up this bad habit of trusting and yet being afraid.

Be of good courage, you very, very timid ones, and alter your tone. Try to put a “Selah” into your life, as David often did in his Psalms. Frequently, he put in a “Selah” and then he changed the key directly. In like manner, change the key of your singing—you are a great deal too low. Let the harp strings be tightened up a bit and let us have no more of these flat, mournful notes. Give us some other key, please, and begin to say with the prophet Isaiah, “O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust, and not be afraid.”

II. Now, in the second place, I am going to *untwist the text*. That is to say, I will try to spread it out a little, to show you what there is in it, applying it to different instances in which it will be right and proper for you to say, “I will trust, and not be afraid.”

And first, dear friend, say this about *trusting in Christ*, “I will trust, and not be afraid.” Some dear souls are afraid to trust Jesus. If they understood the matter better, they would be afraid *not* to trust Him. He commands us to trust Him and He has declared very plainly what are the consequences of

disobedience to this command—“He that believeth not shall be damned”—so that faith must be a duty, and unbelief a terrible offense in the sight of God.

Where it becomes a thoroughly confirmed unbelief, which masters the mind and heart, it is a truly awful state for anyone to be in. Beloved, never be afraid of trusting Christ. Lean hard on Him, lean your whole weight on Him. Come, lay at His feet your burdens, your sins, your cares, your troubles—nothing delights our Lord more than being trusted—and the more we trust Him the more we please Him. “Without faith it is impossible to please him,” but when you have faith, then you may lay what you will on the great Burden-bearer, “casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you,” saying, as you do so, “I will trust, and never be afraid of trusting Jesus; but I will be afraid of distrusting Him.”

O dear friends, never be afraid of Jesus! Do you fear Immanuel or dread the Lamb of God? The Lamb is a beautiful emblem of Christ—what little child is afraid of a lamb? He might be afraid of a young lion, but even an infant will put its hand on a lamb and play with it without the slightest fear. Never be afraid of coming to Christ.

As I have often told you, you need a Mediator between yourselves and God, but you need no Mediator between yourselves and *the* Mediator, the man Christ Jesus. That were to make the Mediator of no use to you. Come to Him just as you are and say, “I will not be afraid of the Lord Jesus Christ. I will trust Him and not be afraid.”

Go on to say, “I will trust, and not be afraid *concerning all my past sinfulness*. It is enough to make me afraid, but I have read in the Scriptures that, ‘the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.’ And that, ‘all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.’ So then, I, red-handed, black as hell’s profoundest night, am not afraid to come and wash in the fountain filled with blood, crying to the Lord as I do it, ‘Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow—yes, whiter than snow.’”

O beloved, trust in Jesus and be not afraid, whatever your iniquity and transgression may have been in the past, for He shall blot out as a thick cloud your transgressions and as a cloud your sins!

As for *present sinfulness*, your heart is very sinful, “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,” but you may say, even concerning that, “I will trust, and not be afraid,” for the Lord has said, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” He can make you pure and holy, He can give you a heart of flesh, tender and sensitive to the movements of His divine Spirit. You shall have a new nature, having within it a living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever.

Now I want you to go a stage further, if you can, and say, “I will trust, and not be afraid *about anything concerning which I dare trust*.” There are some things about which you cannot trust God. If you go into evil company, you may not say, “I will trust God that I shall get no injury.” If you begin to frequent places of questionable amusement, you may not say, “I trust God that I may go in and out of this pest-house and yet not take the disease.” That is presumption, not faith.

But whenever you trust God about your cares, your troubles, or whatever it may be, say to yourself concerning this also, “I will trust, and not be afraid.” Is it not a blessed thing that all the wants of God’s people can be readily supplied by their God? It has been calculated that to feed the children of Israel in the wilderness, it must have required a hundred thousand bushels of manna every day.

Now, you young people, set to work and calculate how much that makes in forty years. Whence did it all come? Well, as far as the eye could see, it came from nowhere—yet it fell everywhere. If you were in want of a hundred thousand bushels of wheat tomorrow—I mean, if you as a child of God really needed it, God could get that where he got the hundred thousand bushels of manna every morning—that is, out of His own all-sufficiency. He can certainly supply all your need—wherefore say, “I will trust, and not be afraid about anything and about everything that is a lawful subject of trust. Whatever God calls me to be, to do, or to suffer, I will trust in Him and not be afraid.”

I desire always to do this as God’s minister. I have not always done it, I am sorry to say, yet I wish to do it. Did you ever notice this one thing about Christian ministers, that they need even more mercy than other people? Possibly someone asks, “How do you know that?” Well, I feel quite safe when I am following the apostle Paul. And if you look through his epistles to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the

Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, and to Philemon, you will see what blessings he wishes to the people at the beginning of each letter, or if it is not quite at the beginning, it is a few verses down—“Grace unto you, and peace.”

You recollect that Paul also wrote three epistles to ministers—there are two to Timothy and one to Titus. What does he say to them? He says, “Grace, *mercy*, and peace, from God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord,” as if he thought that, although everybody needs mercy, ministers need it more than anybody else.

And so we do, for if we are not faithful, we shall be greater sinners even than our hearers, and it needs much grace for us always to be faithful, and much mercy will be required to cover our shortcomings. So I shall take those three things to myself—“Grace, mercy, and peace.” You may have the two, “Grace and peace,” but I need mercy more than any of you.

So I take it from my Lord’s loving hand, and I will trust, and not be afraid, despite all my shortcomings, and feebleness, and blunders, and mistakes in the course of my whole ministry. I will still cast all my burden upon my blessed Lord and will still go on trusting and not being afraid. But dear friends, you may do the same—let us all do it. God help us to do it, from this time forth, and He shall have all the glory!

III. I shall only occupy a very few minutes over the other two points. I have twisted the text and untwisted it. Now I have to PRESS IT HOME UPON YOUR HEARTS.

“I will trust, and not be afraid,” because, *if I am afraid, it will dishonor God*. If I trust God, and then am afraid, it will bring disgrace upon His name. What am I afraid of? If He has given me a promise, and I trust it, why should I be afraid? Am I afraid that He cannot fulfill it? Let not any of us get like Moses when he said, “The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?”

Moses had got into a questioning state of mind, but God said to him, “Is the LORD’s hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.” God *can* certainly fulfill His promise, whatever the promise may be. Why be afraid, then? Are you afraid that He *will not* fulfill His promise? That is a slur upon His honor, upon His truth, upon His faithfulness.

“Oh, but I cannot think that He would fulfill His promise to me!” You must have a very queer code of morality, I should think, to talk like that. Do you imagine that a man may break his promise to another if that other happens to turn out badly? Why, if I made a promise to the devil, and it were a proper promise for me to make, I would keep it to him. I should not consider that I had any right to run back from my pledged word because the person to whom I promised to give something was not what he should be. And depend upon it, God will keep His promise whatever you may be. “If we believe not, he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.” Do not, therefore, doubt either God’s power or His willingness to fulfill His promise to you.

“Ah!” you say, “I know that He used to keep His promise, and that He blessed Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and David, and Daniel, and many more.” And has God changed since then? Has He become a fickle God? Oh, you slander Him by the very thought! It verges upon blasphemy. He who was true to Abraham will be true to all who trust Him.

He has never been false to anyone yet and He never will be. He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever—an immutable God, keeping His Word from generation to generation and departing not from the covenant which He has made with the sons of men. Oh, trust Him and be not afraid, or else you will dishonor His holy name! You would not wish to do that, I am sure.

Again, trust Him, and be not afraid, *or else you will greatly plague yourself*. Do you not think that, by not trusting God, we often make rods for our own backs? We think we can foresee a great trouble which very likely will never come. I knew one good old soul who used to worry herself about whether she would have enough money left to bury her. That is a trouble which, I confess, will never occur to

me—I think that people will be quite willing to bury me, whether I provide for it or not—sooner or later, they will attend to that.

But it did trouble the poor old lady very much. She said that if she lived to be eighty, all her money would be spent. She was then just about seventy, and she died that year—so she had worried about ten years which she afterwards spent in heaven! What was the good of all that fretting? “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof?” Do not import from tomorrow the sorrow which belongs to it, but leave all your cares and anxieties in the hands of God, or else you may worry, and trouble, and fret, and vex, and grieve yourself, and worse still, you will also grieve the Spirit of God.

Permit me to add also that I would earnestly entreat you to trust and not be afraid, *or else you will be a worry to other people*. It is our duty to bear with sad people, and I hope we do, but when there are people who have nothing to be sad about, it is an extraordinary tax upon patience which ought not to be levied. There is enough misery in this world without you and me making an unnecessary pennyworth of it.

“O ye banished seed, be glad!”

You are the children of the happy God. Rouse yourselves up and spread all around you an atmosphere of cheerfulness and joy, as you sing, “I will trust, and not be afraid.”

If you do not trust, *you will get more and more afraid*. If you do not strive against your fear, and pray against it, you will at last get to be afraid to be indoors for fear a stack of chimneys should fall upon the house. You will be afraid to go into the street, lest a tile should be blown from the roof. You will be afraid to go to sleep lest you should die before you awake—and you will be afraid to keep awake for fear you should meet any new trouble. You will get to be like an aspen leaf, forever trembling.

Instead of being in this wretched state, the Christian should ask God that he may be courageous—and faith is a grand support to courage and steadfastness. Nothing can occur to us but what God ordains. Nothing can happen to the believer but what God has prepared or permitted for him. Put on the whole armor of God and you shall be, from head to foot, panoplied against all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Then, indeed, you may trust and not be afraid. God grant that our text may be so pressed home upon our hearts that we may at once begin to be more cheerful if we have been dull and sad in the past!

IV. Now, lastly, I am going to PRAISE THE TEXT and then I shall have done.

O brethren, if you can say, “I will trust, and not be afraid,” how *bold* you will be! You will go forward in duty. You will go forward in service. You will go forward in the confession of Christ before men, not asking whether men like it or dislike it, for while you trust in God you will not be afraid of men.

I daresay you have heard the story of a certain boy who went to sea. On his first voyage, the captain said to him, “Can you climb?” He answered, “Oh, yes!” He thought he could climb, for he had been up an old tree at home after a raven’s nest. So, after a time, the captain told him to climb the mast to attend to something up aloft. As the ship plunged into the trough of the sea and then rose again to the crest of the waves, and the poor boy felt the mast swaying to and fro as the tree in the garden had never done, he began to feel very strange and he feared that he should fall.

The good captain, who was watching him, and who thought it very likely that he would fall, shouted out to him, “Boy, look up! Look up!” He did look up and that saved him. He had been growing dizzy and would have fallen if he had continued looking at the waves—and then he would have been killed. But when he looked up, everything above was all right. The sun does not reel to and fro. So looking up, the lad forgot his fears, performed his duty, and descended in safety.

You will find that the best thing for you also to do, my dear brother, look up! When you have been looking down and all around you, and you have begun to tremble and to fear that you will fall, look up, look up! Say, “I will trust, and not be afraid”—and that looking up will make you bold in your Master’s service.

Then, again, I press this text upon you, because it will make you so *wise*. I am sure that many a man has done a wrong thing through being afraid. It is the man on board the boat who gets to worrying and moving about—who causes confusion and upsets the craft, but the person who knows that he cannot do anything by worrying or leaping from one side to the other, just keeps his place, and does the proper thing, and the boat goes on all right.

Here is a man in the market. He is dealing in certain goods and somehow, everything seems to go against him. Now, if he frets, and worries, and says, “I shall get into *The Gazette*, I know that I shall,” it is very likely that he will. But if he is wise enough just to step aside into some quiet corner, and there stand still and pray—all will be well. No one but the Lord heard what he said, but that did not matter. Just speaking to God in that fashion quiets his mind and calms his spirit, and when he comes back, he seems to say to himself, “Now I am ready for anything. I am cool and restful, and I can see what I ought to do because I am not afraid. I am trusting in God.”

If you are afraid, you cannot win the battle of life. You must have courage, and courage can only come to you through faith. Therefore, again I press the text upon you—say from your heart, “I will trust, and not be afraid”—and you will do the wisest thing that can possibly be done.

Then, how *strong* you will be—so strong that you will be able to communicate of your strength to others! When that ship, *Castor and Pollux*, was tossed about on the sea, everybody on board was in a tremble except one man—a little Jew whom they all despised at first, but whom they all came to honor. You know the story—“And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.”

Then later on, Paul said, “This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.”

That was the very best thing for them all—what can a sailor do when he has not had anything to eat? What can any of us do when we get starved? So they all ate and were strengthened, and when the time came for action, they were ready for it. It was Paul’s calm confidence in God that was the means of saving all who were in that vessel. O dear child of God, if you can be like that brave man, you will be a great blessing wherever you are!

And then, lastly, how *happy* you will be! If you can say, “I will trust, and not be afraid,” you will be as happy as the days are long at mid-summer and your heart shall sing as do the birds in the early morning, and your soul shall be like a watered garden in the flowery month of June, and you yourself shall have two heavens—a heaven on earth and then the eternal heaven above. You shall go from glory unto glory, God Himself being with you.

I pray the Holy Spirit Himself to write this message on your hearts, “I will trust, and not be afraid.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 27

Verse 1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?*

If a man has a light that can never go out—a sun which will never set—and a salvation which must always save—and God is all that and more to everyone who trusts Him—then what ground has he for fear?

1. *The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

If I live in Him and He lives in me, who can kill me? Who can hurt me? If He is my strength, what duty will be impossible? What suffering will crush me? “Of whom shall I be afraid?”

2. *When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.*

They were both wicked in character and fierce in disposition, for they had resolved to eat him right up, as wild beasts might have done. They were successful as far as they were permitted to go, for he says, “They came upon me.” Yet he needed not to lift either sword or spear against them, for “they stumbled and fell” of themselves. Such is the power of God that He soon discovers the weakness of the adversaries of His people.

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;*

It is then that we mostly do fear, before the fight begins, when the enemy lies encamped against us. We do not know how strong is the foe, nor what mischief he is going to do to us—and the uncertainty often brings a dread with it. Yet, says the psalmist, “though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.”

3. *Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.*

Let my enemies begin the battle, let the noise and the smoke and the dust of the fight surround me, I will still be—

*“Calm ‘mid the bewild’ring cry,
Confident of victory.”*

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after;*

It is a grand thing to get your heart so focused that it has but one desire—and then to be aroused to the practical pursuit of that one object.

4. *That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.*

Is it possible for a man to live in God’s house all his days? Oh, yes! Good men do not desire impossibilities. “But” say you, “we cannot always be in the church or the meeting house.” No, and even if you were, you might not be in God’s house any the more for that. But to be like a child at home with God wherever you may be, to live in Him and with Him wherever you are, this is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of your life.

You may begin dwelling in the lower rooms of that house even now, and by and by, He will call to you and say, “Friend, come up higher,” and you will ascend to the upper room where the glorified dwell forever with their God. It is my one desire always to be—

*“No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home,—”*

at home with my God all the days of my life, that I may behold His unutterable beauty, and that I may inquire in His temple what is His will, and what are the exceeding great and precious promises which He has made to me in His Word.

5. *For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:*

If you live in God, it matters little whether you have trouble or delight, for you shall be hidden in His pavilion.

5. *In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.*

There is the pavilion of sovereignty. There is the tabernacle of sacrifice. There is the rock of immutability, and he who can get in or on those three places is the safest man under heaven. Hidden in

God’s royal tent, secreted in the innermost shrine of deity—the holy of holies—and set up by the Lord Himself upon an uncrumbling rock, what more can he desire?

6. *And now shall mine head be lifted up above my enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.*

David always comes back to his God. Nay, he does not go away from Him. Trusting Him, praising Him, adoring Him—this is the very life of this Psalm, as it ought to be of our whole life. The psalmist says, “I will sing.” But the next verse is,—

7. *Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.*

One moment he praises and the next moment he prays. That is quite right. I have often said to you that we live by breathing in and breathing out. We breathe in the atmosphere of heaven by prayer and we breathe it out again by praise. Prayer and praise make up the essentials of the Christian’s life. Oh, for more of them—not prayer without praise, nor praise without prayer! Prayer and praise, like the two horses in Pharaoh’s chariot, make our Christian life to run smoothly and swiftly to God’s honor and glory.

8. *When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.*

As if it were an echo, “Thy face, LORD, will I seek.” And he did seek it and seek it at once. But oh! there are many who have long been called to seek God’s face, who have never obeyed the summons. Are *you* among that number? If so, the Lord have mercy upon you and call you yet again! When He says, “Seek ye my face,” answer, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek.”

9. *Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.*

This is grand praying on the part of David. He pleads the past as a reason for mercy in the present—“Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.” It is a very bad thing to live on past experiences alone. We want fresh visitations from God. Old manna and old experiences soon become corrupt, but you can make some use of your past experience, as you may have seen the bargeman do on the canal, you may push backward to send your boat forward. Sometimes, when you have but little hope within you, you may recollect what God did for you in the past—and then you can plead with Him to do the same again—“Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.”

10. *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.*

“My father and my mother are the last to forsake me. They were the first to love me, and they will be the last to leave me, but if they do leave me, then JEHOVAH will take me up, and He will be both father and mother to me.” Just as it was said to Naomi concerning Ruth, “Thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, is better to thee than seven sons,” so may the Lord say to His bereaved people, “Am I not better unto you than father, or mother, or sister, or children, or wife, or husband? Am I not better than all beside? Can you not find all in Me?”

“The Lord will take me up.” What a beautiful figure this is! The child seems deserted, but God takes it up and carries it in His bosom. “Oh, I am no child!” says one. But do you not recollect that precious text, “Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you”—you old ones as well as young ones—“I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” It is well to be bereft of every earthly confidence that we may be taken up by God alone.

11. *Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.*

“Make it clear what I ought to do. Make it so clear that I shall do it. Let me not try to excuse myself, but may my way be so plainly upright and true that even my enemies cannot say anything against me! ‘Lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.’”

12. *Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.*

“Cruelty is their very breath. Lord, save me from their cruelty!”

13. *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.*

“I had fainted, unless I had believed.” You have the choice between these two things—you must either faint or have faith. Faith is the blessed smelling-bottle that will often prevent a fainting fit. Get but a sniff of the promises, do but know how strong they are, and your poor flagging spirit will revive.

“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see.” What? “Believed to see?” That is David’s way of putting it. Many want to see to believe—that is our carnal way, but the faith-way, the gracious way is, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of JEHOVAH in the land of the living.”

14. *Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.*

He is worth waiting upon. God help us all to wait on Him, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—196, 175, 675

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